



My Next Steps:

Maintaining your Connection to the Military Community after Transition



Question

How can I maintain a connection with the military or military spouse community after my family's transition from the military? With what organizations can I connect?



Answer

Many military families report that one of the most enjoyable aspects of military service is the closeness of their military communities. Transition from the military can pose challenges for service members and their families in terms of finding a similar level of community connection, support and purpose after leaving the military. Finding ways to stay connected to the military community can be an excellent way to maintain the feelings of camaraderie, purpose and patriotism that have been at the heart of your family's military experience.

Throughout your service member's military career, your military spouse friends have been, and can continue to be, one of your best resources for support, advice and information after transition. Fortunately, maintaining a connection with your military friends, no matter where you are, is easier than ever due to social media. Social media also provides many opportunities to join online communities of support. Many social media groups exist to connect military families who have transitioned out of the service to other families who are in this new chapter of military life.

In addition to staying connected to your military friends and to online support, you may enjoy involvement with the many social and serving organizations that exist to support the military and its members. Volunteering for, joining or otherwise participating in activities with these organizations can help you maintain your connection to the military

community while also helping you build networks and make a difference in your new community. Hundreds of veteran- and military family-serving and social organizations exist. Begin early and determine which of these groups fuels your interests and passions and helps you maintain your heartfelt connection to the military, whether you choose to do that in person or virtually. The organizations mentioned below can represent a good place to start your research.

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If your family decides to settle near a military installation, you may choose to stay connected by volunteering on base or by joining clubs or organizations on the installation, such as the spouses' club or the retiree council. The volunteer coordinator at the Military and Family Support Center can advise you of volunteer positions, and someone at your Military and Family Support Center can also point you to club or organization websites or Facebook pages for more information about other opportunities for involvement.

Visit MySECO on Social Media



Resources at a Glance

- [Locate](#) a Military Family Support Center
- [USO](#)
- Department of Veterans Affairs - [Veteran and Military Service Organization Directory](#)
- American Red Cross - [Military Families and Veterans Program](#)



Answer (cont.)

Many military-serving organizations can also be found away from military installations in locations all over the world. These organizations recruit caring and compassionate individuals to directly support service members, veterans and military families. The American Red Cross is one example. As a military spouse, you may be perfectly suited to volunteer or seek employment with the Red Cross, and here you can continue to provide friendship and assistance to military families. Other veteran- or military family-serving organizations, such as the United Service Organization, offer volunteer and employment opportunities that are well-suited for military spouses. Team Red, White and Blue and Team Rubicon are two of many veteran-founded organizations that enable military and community members to come together for camaraderie and support. In addition, they serve a larger purpose by helping their local communities or communities in crises. Most of these military-serving organizations have local chapters, so, by getting involved, you can forge strong personal connections to like-minded people in your community after transitioning from the military.

If you find advocating for military families fulfilling, and you have an interest in law, regulation and policy, you may want to consider membership in a military advocacy organization. The National Military Family Association is one such organization and aims to be the voice of support for military families. NMFA has a large legislative presence in Washington D.C. and expansive resources that are available to military spouses and family members. Another organization working on behalf of military families is Blue Star Families, which was created for military spouses by military spouses; however, membership is open to anyone.

BSF provides a variety of ways for its members to engage with other military families, including opportunities to volunteer, participate in local community-building events and networking opportunities and find or become a mentor. Each branch of service also has its own association of members who work on behalf of Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen and their families, respectively. Opportunities to engage with these organizations, including virtual opportunities, will allow you to continue to advocate for the needs of the military community. All of these organizations welcome veterans and military spouses as members and active participants.

Other opportunities to stay connected to a life of public service and purpose can be discovered online at [USA.gov](https://www.usa.gov), [Volunteer.gov](https://www.volunteer.gov) and [NationalService.gov](https://www.national-service.gov). Explore these websites to match your skills and interests with engaging service work. These sites and others invite wounded warriors, veterans, and military spouses to continue to serve with a focus on disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures and helping veterans and military families.

As you prepare to transition from the military to the civilian world, opportunities abound to stay connected to your military family through social media and through the many local and national organizations that provide social and service activities. These opportunities to stay connected and involved may not only help bridge the gap between your family's life while on active duty and after leaving the military, they may also help you build connections in your new community regardless of where your transition takes your family.



Steps to Consider

These "Steps to Consider" are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- If you haven't already, build your social media presence and begin connecting with military friends on social media platforms. Seek support and advice from your military spouse friends about transition. Ask for recommendations about what social media groups and pages may be worthwhile to follow or join as your family makes the transition from military to civilian life.
- Discuss with your service member the importance you each place on staying connected to your military friends, the military community and a purposeful life of service. If either of you feels anxiety or a sense of loss of identity or connection regarding transitioning out of the military, talk to a medical or mental health provider for support. [Military OneSource](#) can connect you to [non-medical counseling](#) or can help you get a referral to a local professional who can help.
- Talk to your service member about the benefits of living near a military installation after transition out of the



Steps to Consider (cont.)

- military, such as work and volunteer opportunities and social engagements with the military community. Staff at the nearest [installation's](#) Military and Family Support Center, including the volunteer coordinator, can help direct you to opportunities for involvement.
- Research options for involvement with military-serving or advocacy organizations after transition from the military. Review each organization's mission to find a match for your personal and professional goals and your interests and passions. Start with a review of the organizations' websites listed in the resources section.
 - Review the [Veteran and Military Service Organization Directory](#) published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and lists contacts and information for many national and state level organizations that represent the interests of veterans and military families.
 - Personally explore opportunities to connect with other military-connected populations. Website search engines and social media platforms can help you find the contact information for the organization that is right for you.
 - Find each organization on the web or on social media platforms to network and engage with those communities online.
 - Join any organizations that are a good match for your interests or needs.



Resources

- Military OneSource Confidential Help: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos/confidential-help>

Installation Resource

Locate a Military Family Support Center office: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose "I'm looking for a program or service." Then, type in "Family Center" in the "I'm choosing from" text field. Next, you'll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the "Search" button.

Highlighted Resources

- The American Red Cross Military Families/Veterans Program: <http://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/military-families>
- USO: <https://www.uso.org/>
- National Military Family Association: <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>
- Blue Star Families: <https://bluestarfam.org/>
- USA.gov Public Service and Volunteer Opportunities: <https://www.usa.gov/volunteer>
- Volunteer.gov: <https://www.volunteer.gov/>
- Corporation for National and Community Service: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve>
- Team Red, White and Blue: <https://www.teamrwb.org/>
- Team Rubicon: <https://teamrubiconusa.org/>

Service Branch Specific Associations

- Marine Corps Association & Foundation: <https://www.mca-marines.org/>
- Association of the United States Army: <https://www.ausa.org/>
- Association of the United States Navy: <https://ausn.org/>
- Air Force Association: <https://www.afa.org/home>



Notes

Emotional Health Support

- Connecting with Mentors to Ease your Family's Transition from the Military

- **Networking to Find Employment as your Family Transitions from the Military**